

City Council Chamber, City Hall, Monday, September 5, 2005

A Special Emergency Meeting of the Houston City Council was held at 1:00 p.m. Monday, September 5, 2005, with Mayor Bill White presiding and with Council Members Toni Lawrence, Carol M. Galloway, Mark Goldberg, Ada Edwards, Addie Wiseman, M. J. Khan, Pam Holm, Adrian Garcia, Carol Alvarado, Mark Ellis, Gordon Quan, Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, M.D., Ronald C. Green and Michael Berry; Mr. Anthony Hall, Chief Financial Officer, Mayor's Office; Mr. Arturo Michel, City Attorney, Ms. Marty Stein, Agenda Director and Mr. Jose Soto, Deputy Agenda Director present.

At 1:08 p.m. Mayor White called to order the meeting of the City Council and requested the City Secretary to call the roll. Council Members Galloway, Wiseman, Garcia, Sekula-Gibbs and Green absent.

Mayor White led everyone in prayer and Council Member Alvarado led everyone in the pledge of allegiance.

1. Discussion and briefing on the Hurricane Katrina disaster relief efforts.

Mayor White stated that he would give a brief status report, that the Council Members had gotten his memo on Friday and if they did not he would try to email them by the end of the day, that when he used the term colleagues he included the City Controller, that it had been their goal and vision as a community that they would create a virtual organization to do the task they needed to do, first to give care and then hope and opportunity in the American mainstream for those people who were victims of Katrina, the survivors had found a welcome home in Houston, Texas, that by his estimate there were between 150,000 and 200,000 people who were evacuees, former residents of the delta area, who were in our metropolitan area, that in communicating to themselves, their citizens, their community and indeed for planning for the future of Houston, it was important that they understood what he was to say next, that many many people, tens of thousands, arrived to the largest city to the east of New Orleans in response to the Mayor's request for evacuations, they went to the homes of people, sometimes to their churches, first to their friends to see if they could find shelter and if they could not they would to a sanctuary, a community based organization, some families had been moving from home to home and it had occurred in every neighborhood in the City, and they had people from Great Saint Mathews on the south side, a church that just made it by every Sunday, they had 170 individuals who had gone from home to home, five of them permanently placed in homes, several where people moved in with their aunt and then she made her home available on an indefinite basis, to people who were living in garage apartments, to facilities that were not in use, which were occupied that they fixed up and had been moving people to, that they did not know what the population was but it was the largest of all, tens and tens of thousands that were in non Red Cross shelters, that they had about 55,000 hotel and motel rooms and some places were packed, those rooms had been full and some people ran out of money at those places and were coming into the shelter, that he did not have a perfect estimate but the high end of the range would be 100,000 and low end would be about 50,000 people, less occupied rooms in the hotel and motel space, that they had over 30,000 that had registered through the Red Cross shelters that were in some 20 outlying shelters, and there were the large facilities at the Reliant Arena and George R. Brown Convention Center, not to let the figures deceive them because there were a whole lot of people moving out of those facilities, that as community leaders they constantly needed to be pushing that Houston Katrina Relief efforts, the lines between City, County, private, faith based, community based and corporate needed to recede for the people who were working in the organizations that were organized by task, business line and they had site based management, that it had not been free of issues or people, but it had worked remarkably well and everyone of them should thank those who were involved in County government and had been public leaders of the concept, against those who may wish to keep those lines drawn, that yesterday morning it was a local government effort, with the exception of the Coast Guard, that within the last 24 hours the DPS, National Guard, FEMA, etc. had

stepped in the roles as members of the team without saying they were in control, that it was senior leadership at the federal government and Governor, who participated in their meetings today, that the senior elected officials had all been on the same wavelength, that he told the directors last week and senior staff, as it became clear when the levee's broke, that it was not a weather issue, that they were dealing with the destruction of a major American city and it's aftermath and rebuilding, that their vision should be not to lose a beat in providing good services to the citizens of Houston and to create a virtual organization with extra effort and with extraordinary calls for sacrifice on so many people, that did not miss a beat in providing services to their own citizens while accommodating the population who were in shelters, that it would take discipline, that he would ask people in the senior career management and appointed management of City Hall that just because they were not at a shelter did not mean they were not important, that he needed the City employees in the rank and file to give 105% or 110% to do even better so that the citizens who were skeptics of their ability to handle this could be demonstrated that Houston had the capability of handling everything without putting their guests before the residents, that individuals were extremely important if they were doing their City services without a memo from him, that if they succeeded in that they would be so much stronger as a city because they would understand that it did not take an 18 month process to give a person a voucher and putting them in a new facility, that they would be working as a team to accomplish a brand new version of what it meant to be the most efficient and responsive local government in the United States of America, which was their goal, that he had picked up the line with the CEO's of some of America's biggest companies and some of their big employers and said to set up a source code, a source was going to contact them to give them whatever they wanted and they would figure out who would pay later, that it might end up being corporate donations but they would move heaven and earth to make sure that if it was there and reimbursable they would be reimbursed from FEMA, that he had talked to the person who had appointed most of the Board Members of Wal-Mart, Mr. Jose Villarreal, that he dropped his family vacation and called the CEO of Wal-Mart and anything that they needed, he wanted their logistics, people being on the grounds to deliver within 24 hours, that it was his commitment that He could go down the list and they would not believe what had happened within the medical community, that there was a difference between the talkers and the doers and the people who showed up at the facilities, that there were amazing stories of what was occurring it was not all just at the big centers, that they would all be asked to say thank you in a very big way, that the final concluding point had to do with fiscal impacts and reimbursements, that at the time that he called the Special Emergency Meeting he did not know exactly what was coming at Houston, but he did know that there was nobody besides local government that was on the receiving end of a massive number of surviving evacuees that were coming to Houston, that he did not know if somebody had a need that was why he called this meeting, that his goal was that every dollar of City expense should be reimbursed by FEMA or the private sector because so much of what the City did was providing services to everybody, that was his goal and with the senior FEMA person arriving in town yesterday, at the first working group meeting this morning the evaluation was that things were going to change on that and quickly, that there were a lot of questions from FEMA that were unanswered but they were making progress, on the housing voucher side, HUD, he had dealt with the White House and others and thought that was going to be in pretty good change really quick, that there may be some extraordinary needs between the time that they could get FEMA reimbursement or private contributions and for that he just wanted to have designated a fund or some authority in the City government, that if he had to do all of it over again he would lower the amount that was in the ordinance, he just picked out a number from a fund that would not be taken from something that they would be expending this year, for which there was authorization that they could use more in the form of a loan, could he guarantee that they would be reimbursed anything, that FEMA said disaster related expense, including the things that were necessary, food, clothing, shelter, etc., no, because he was not family and they had some receipts left over from Allison that were legitimate expenses, that he would tell them his judgment and the judgment of their Senators and U.S. Representatives, there was no more pressing issue on the minds of the American people right now and it would be transformational, just like 9-1-1 was transformational for some people, that people were hearing from home and people of all backgrounds that this was the priority of the federal government of the United

States and that between the time that the Senate and House leadership and White House estimated that there would be an emergency relief bill within 10 to 14 days of the time that the levees broke and quickly a lot of people from all parties and all backgrounds concluded within a 12 hour period of time that it needed to be done within 24 hours and \$10.5 billion was appropriated, money to be spent and determined, that they did know the speed on which they would be able to get people back all their lives with dignity and independence and have the ability to find jobs if most of the people who were working in New Orleans wanted, but things were now occurring very quickly in the process in a way that indicated to him that everybody, normal FEMA, HUD and other procedures were being superseded, that he had seen enough evidence of it, he had seen the authority that was given from the very top of the combined bipartisan leadership of Congress and the President, that for this reason he would say that he could not guarantee, that the item would give them the ability to respond to things and hoped it would be in the nature of interim financing and except for things in the regular course of government, such as personal overtime, for so much of what had been done, they had not had to spend a penny because people were paying for the expenses, that they expected private contributions to the Houston Relief Effort to be substantial, that on Tuesday morning the first that the law allowed, he and the County Judge and a diverse group of elected leadership were asked to serve on the board and governance of a new organization with volunteer by and large staff, which was the Houston Katrina Relief Fund, that they tried to learn what went right and wrong on the non profit effort on 9-1-1 and the major national organizations, that they were not going to accept or allow somebody to give a check that was supposed to go to Houston or intended to go to Houston to be diverted to pay salaries of somebody sitting upstairs in Washington, D. C., that he would not discourage those contributions, he wanted to encourage all Americans to give to the relief effort, that he knew there were burdens in Louisiana and Mississippi greater than our own and they ought to come out of their pocket as they had, there were some contributors that had given nationally and to various States and wanted to help Houston because that was where their home was and knew what Houston was confronting, that he wanted to make sure that if they received those funds that they had our word that there was management and oversight where they were allocated based on the areas of greatest needs to provide the interim financing, to be disbursed to governmental entities that incurred extraordinary un-reimbursed costs and existing non-profit structures, they were not going to be creating new organizations or competing with organizations because they wanted it not to erode but to strengthen the non profit base that they had in the City, that he had given some background and would ask for votes to give authority and could tell them that from late afternoon to the time he was addressing them was a real turning point in both the organizational efforts and the fact that while they still continued to see people who were being evacuated physically in that region and others across America, in this community between tonight and noon today, there was a much larger group which were being placed in places with a future, that their agenda as a community was going from a comforting and open shelter to a place where people had hope and opportunity to get on with the rest of their lives with dignity and independence and that transition, for many families, had already been made.

Members of Council congratulated Mayor White for his leadership and thanked the Mayor's staff, the administration, the City employees, all the organizations and all citizens of the City of Houston and Harris County who had been a part of the relief effort for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, and Council Member Sekula-Gibbs requested that they have better communication between the Mayor's office and the Council offices in terms of what was going on, and Council Member Edwards requested if they could get some type of concrete information out to people regarding FEMA registration, regarding how they could get identification cards, that she had not heard of Metro's role in this piece and if they could get some type of process going where people could get out of the shelters to get out to job interviews; that some of the survivors first language was Spanish and she had not seen a lot of general information that was coming out; and Council Member Galloway requested a meeting with Mr. Walsh and Mr. Wilson regarding that she had approximately 400 apartments in her district where they could be restored and provide housing; and Council Member Quan asked if they had a central place where people could contact to register for job opportunities, and Mayor White stated that they

would have a job fair at the Toyota Center on Thursday all day, and Mayor White stated that Mayor's of other American and other people had called to say they wanted to take a number of people, but the customers and the first line caregivers said that they did not want people hearing that they were going to load them on buses before they found their children or mother or father; and Council Member Ellis asked Mayor White if he had talked about setting up a 501C (3) where individuals could contribute to the fund and Mayor White stated that was correct; and Council Member Lawrence asked how the RCA would affect the CIP and Mayor White stated that they were not going to cancel any CIP projects, he was going to seek to get every penny reimbursed and was not going to raise property taxes, that they were not going to waste any money, and Council Member Goldberg asked what was the plan if they did not get reimbursed and if it did come out of their CIP and Mayor White stated that every criteria that FEMA had used and everything that they had said would indicate that they had reimbursable expenditures, that it was his plan to make sure it did not affect the CIP. Council Member Edwards absent.

After further discussion, Council Member Goldberg called for the order of the day. Council Member Edwards absent.

Council Member Galloway moved to hear from the public speakers at this time, seconded by Council Member Khan. Mayor White stated that if there was no objection it was so ordered. Council Member Edwards absent.

4. Public Comments.

Mayor White requested the City Secretary to call the public speakers.

Minister Robert Muhammad appeared and stated that he too wanted to congratulate the City of Houston, Texas for the way they received their neighbors from Louisiana, that things were stabilizing now, that he had been to the George R. Brown and wanted to congratulate the staff for the good work they had done there, that he was a little concerned over at the Astrodome and the Reliant Center when he went over there and thought they could do better, they wanted to get those people out of those shelters right away and get back into the convention business, that he was in for the second wave, what was going to happen six months from now was what was on his mind, that he met and ministered to a lot of people who had mental health issues from the trauma and near death experiences, what then would be the role of the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Agencies along with the Health Department, that he talked with a lot of youth over there and they had some potential criminal justice issues, that there were street organizations among their youth and the ward wars that were taking place in New Orleans had now arrived in Houston, that he wanted to let Council Member Ellis know that he could let President Vicente Fox and the Mexican Consulate know that he met plenty of people that were ready to take back those jobs that they would not do so they did not have to worry about the Minute Men any more because they had plenty people here that would take those jobs, that he needed to ask the question about when were they going to get serious about affordable housing, that this would be a great time to be about that, that he had concerns about the virtual organization insomuch that they had the private and public sector mentioned and Federal and State but what about the community based organizations or the ministerial advisory board plugging into the virtual organization, who on the community level was in on the meetings and sitting in on the planning meetings, that he thanked Mr. Fontaine and Mr. Moore for being very informative, that they kept him in the loop, that he liked being briefed but sometimes he liked to be in the planning of things, that he knew things hit the ground fast and they could not just call him or anybody else, that the process of communicating those decisions to the community always caught him in the loop. Council Member Edwards absent.

Upon questions by Council Members, Reverend Muhammad stated that they had to be very vigilant and they had to watch the children particularly and because of the density they could not short change themselves on law enforcement, that sometimes it was hard for people to change their ways, that he had an opportunity to talk to many of the people who may be hard

core, that he had to believe in GOD'S redeeming power for man to change so he hoped that those sins would not follow them to Houston or they would have to worry about sexual predators, but thought they should remain very vigilant, that he supported what they were getting ready to vote for but they could empty the Astrodome and all of those places literally overnight if everybody would go and adopt a family, once they screened them. Mayor White absent. Mayor Pro Tem Alvarado presiding.

Mr. Kofi Taharka appeared and stated that he had a question and brief comments, that they wanted to know who was making the decisions, that if they were solely dependent upon the media to tell them whether they should bring goods or come and volunteer at various times and so forth then it was one thing that made it difficult, that he wanted to reiterate about clear, concise information being communicated across the board so people could know how they could be most effectively helpful, that in that decision making process, because there was a cultural aspect to most of the people that were there, primarily African Americans, that he was in the Astrodome yesterday and they announced over the loudspeaker that Dr. Phil was there to provide counseling and people laughed because they figured that Dr. Phil could not necessarily relate on a grassroots level to that 90% some percent population coming out of the inner city of New Orleans, but they had their own Dr. Phil's in their community but they could not get them in there if they were not plugged in some kind of way to structures that were there. Mayor White absent. Mayor Pro Tem Alvarado presiding.

After discussion by Council Members, Mayor Pro Tom Alvarado stated that no cigarettes were being given out, that there was a collection as people came in and they did take their cigarettes from them and they were given back and they were smoking outside.

Council Member Edwards asked Mr. Taharka if they could get a process by which they could get community groups involved in the planning and information dissemination, would he be willing to work in setting that type of system up, and Mr. Taharka stated yes, that he understood that every question could not be answered today. Mayor White and Council Members Lawrence and Galloway absent.

Mr. Fred Bandera appeared and stated that he was the owner of the Catalina Apartments in Alief, that when he heard about the tragedy he did not wait on finding out the process and thought it was the right thing to do so he opened up his apartment complex to 120 families and with Council Member Khan's office help they had housed 300 to 400 people in those apartments on a temporary basis, that in his opinion it was what his religion and his traditions required him to do, that his church, 100 volunteers, were collecting things and bringing them over directly to the apartments where the displaced people were housed, that he had been bringing buckets of chicken, 200 pieces at a time, to feed people, that people were hungry, that there was no government or FEMA or any other mechanism to answer the question so he was digging into his own wallet to feed them, to get 120 apartments ready he reached his credit limit with Lowes, that he charged it all on his credit card, that to help turn on the power HL&P gave them the run around, just doing one unit at a time, and Mayor White stated that he wanted Mr. Bandera to stay and be matched with people who could get things done in the City, that they would walk through it and see how they could match him up so he could get reimbursed, that they had people from all different backgrounds who would be willing to serve food, that they would try to get his problems solved one by one. Council Member Quan absent.

Mayor White requested the City Secretary to call the agenda items.

2. Ordinance creating the City of Houston Hurricane Katrina Aid and Recovery Fund (the "Fund") and establishing the sources and uses of the funds therein to aid the victims of Hurricane Katrina; appropriating any and all private funds donated to the Fund for the purposes described therein - was presented. All voting aye. Nays none. ORDINANCE 2005-1022 ADOPTED.

3. Ordinance appropriating the sum of \$10,000,000.00 from Fund 405, Street and Bridge Construction Fund, to be deposited in the City of Houston Hurricane Katrina Aid and Recovery Fund for the established purposes of the Fund; and declaring the City's intent to seek reimbursement of expenditures from future bond proceeds, including, to the extent eligible, Homeless and Housing Consolidated Construction Fund and any and all other eligible bond funds and other sources of funding - was presented.

Mayor White stated that his goal was not to have a penny that was not recovered from the fund and the itemized total, expenditures from the City coffers were not even seven figures and he had pledged commitments to him of millions of dollars in private funds and if something happened they needed to be able to act legally quickly in case there was an emergency that they did not know about.

A vote was called on Item No. 3. All voting aye. Nays none. ORDINANCE 2005-1022 ADOPTED.

There being no further business before Council, the City Council adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

DETAILED INFORMATION ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE CITY SECRETARY.

MINUTES READ AND APPROVED

Anna Russell, City Secretary